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JOINT UN/UNESCO SEMINAR ON URBANIZATION IN THE ECAFE REGION

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SURVEY OF THE PROGRESS OF URBANIZATION IN VIET-NAM

Submitted by the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam

After ten years of war and disorders, the time has come for the young Republic of Viet-Nam to decide on policies calculated to ensure order and stability within the framework of the country's economic and cultural development.

1. The untold harm done in the last few years to our heritage left us in a tragic position with our capital equipment destroyed our houses crumbling, our countryside deserted, many villages burnt down, some urban centres razed to the ground and ruins covering the whole land.

Homeless villagers deserted in thousands their rice-fields for the decrepit suburban slums of the cities in quest of work and personal safety; thousands of refugees from the North streamed South in search of a sanctuary, leaving behind their plots of land, their huts, their rice-fields and their live-stock.

To find work and housing for these people has become a task of foremost urgency.

/2. To solve

2. To solve the problem of improving and raising the living and occupational standards of its population, the Government of Viet-Nam owes it to the Nation to undertake without delay the development of the country and the improvement and modernization of its capital equipment layout.

Under the present conditions, the catastrophic and profoundly disturbing state of dilapidation of our heritage requires a coherent urbanization policy.

The government's desire to preserve an optimum demographic density and to facilitate generally the living conditions of the population requires a better organization of collective life through a zoning process differentiating between urban, industrial and rural areas.

PRINCIPAL TARGETS OF THE NATIONAL EQUIPMENT PLAN

I. THE ILLS

(A) At the present time, Viet-Nam suffers from a lack of balance in the distribution of its population and natural resources.

1. There is an overcrowding of population in the deltas and coastal plains; rice is the only cultivated crop, with a resultant shaky economy easily upset by unfavourable weather conditions.

2. Overcrowding of the metropolitan area of Saigon-Cholon and other urban centres like Dalat, Hue, Tourane, Nha-Trang, to which thousands of peasants have been flocking for the past ten years, abandoning their rice-fields in search of greater safety offered by the cities, where they have been living at the expense of the armies of occupation.

3. 600,000 refugees from the North have been or will be taken care of in resettlement villages, which it would be unwise to lay out and build up without a predetermined plan.

4. Some areas like the High Tablelands (Kontum, Darlac, Tioma) are almost empty and completely undeveloped; others, like the Plain of Rushes and the Plain of Camau are lying fallow and should be drained and put under cultivation.

/B. The chaotic

(B) The chaotic conditions which still exist in Viet-Nam are deeply etched into the landscape of the country by the haphazard growth of towns and cities caused by the defaulting political regime of the last decades.

1. Since 1945, in face of the stream of refugees of and military exigencies, the majority of urban centres were developed or reconstructed heedless of planning and aesthetic considerations.

2. The town of Hoi-Am, partly destroyed by the war, does not appear to be any longer adequate as the administrative capital of Quang-Nam province. The same applies to Song-Cau.

   Other administrative capitals like Tan-An and Bac-Lieu, which are not the centre of gravity of their administered areas would grow in importance with the adjunction of the Moc-Hoa and Camau regions.

3. A considerable number of dispersed hamlets will have to be grouped in order to benefit from communal services and environmental facilities and permit a collective cultivation of their lands.

4. Finally, the natural resources of the subsoil have not yet been rationally developed and no industrial centres have been created; e.g. Nong-Son hard coal; Bong-Mieu and Kim-Son gold; Duc Bo zinc; Phu-Quoc jet and Uminh (Camau) peat.

(C) In the field of urbanization planning, the country has as yet disregarded the rational utilization of available building space, or has not yet been in a position to give the matter the consideration it deserves.

1. The haphazard building up pattern is the direct consequence of the absence of urbanization planning, the carelessness of administrative authorities in a troubled period and, finally, of an inadequate and antiquated legislation.

2. The public authorities (admittedly precarious) of the last years drifted into facile and demagogic solutions in the matter of urban expansion programmes and thus have committed irreparable errors.

/3. There is

3. There is a tendency in some towns and cities (Dalat, Nha-Trang, Camau) to disregard planning methods for the sake of rapid reconstruction necessitated by the sudden return of former citizens or the influx of refugees from the North, who came in thousands after the conclusion of the Geneva Agreements.

4. The provincial administrative seats were organized until now as administrative centres and points of exchange of foreign imports and local commodities. They are not equipped for processing local raw materials.

5. In some cities like Saigon-Cholon and Dalat a clear dividing line has been established between residential sections and overcrowded slum areas.

/II. THE REMEDIES

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(A) Decentralization

The first target of a development policy should be to relocate economic activities and to stem the flow of all creative forces towards the cities; it should be endeavoured to revitalize areas, the resources of which are poorly utilized and which remain deserted in spite of their rich potential. Such areas are the High Tablelands of Kontum, Darlac, Langbiang, Tioma and the Plains of the Rushes and Camau. A number of small towns in these areas are destined to spread their economic influence and to receive refugees from the North and the homeless of the interior: Blao, Djiring, Dran, Fimmom, Budang, Poste Maitre, Banmethout, Poste du Lac, Pleikou, Kontum, An-Khe, Camau, Cai-San, Moc-Hoa.

(B) Creation of small-scale and cottage industries

In order to service an independent economy and balance the country's resources, it is necessary to create new fields of activity.

Big processing industries must be set up around large urban centres, whereas small satellite workshops will be centred on rural focal points--e.g. a large spinning mill and a workshop with a few looms; a machine plant and small forges for spare parts.

A number of Viet-Namese towns could offer ideal industrial locations, conveniently served by railways, roads and waterways, in close proximity to power transmission lines, and often quite near to raw material sources.

Thus, Can-Tho has all necessary prerequisites for becoming the centre of the Hau-Giang rice industry (Transbassac), Bien-Hoa would be an ideal centre for the rubber and timber industries; Phan-Thiet could grow into a fisheries processing town; Qui-Nhon could develop spinning mills, oil mills, soap factories, etc.,

(C) Revitalization of agriculture and handicraft

The revitalization of agriculture must keep pace with the expansion of industry. Both branches of the economy are interconnected and mutually dependent.

/Agricultural

Agricultural products, and more particularly, rice, maize and rubber are heading the export list and are consequently an important item of the country's economic potential.

It would be profitable to foster the growth of Tableland and Hau-Giang towns and to channel the population migration towards rice-fields or plantations, either by providing accommodation in new resettlement villages; or in rural towns, which should receive the necessary equipment for handicraft workshops and cottage industries producing oil, flour, sugar, fruit, mats, etc..., and which would provide work for the population during periods of seasonal unemployment between crops.

(D) Tourism and cultural development

Tourism should also play an important role in the resurgence of certain towns.

Dalat with its picturesque countryside and its forests; Huế with its palaces and royal tombs on the River of Scents are natural touristic attractions of national importance.

Hotels should be built for the middle and low income visitor without forgetting, at the same time, that luxury hotels are a profitable asset for towns attracting foreign tourists.

Cultural and intellectual activities should be developed concurrently with growing industrialization and utilization of natural resources. Towns like Huế, Tay-Ninh, Gia-Dinh, Thudaumot could become the seats of the country's intellectual and artistic life.

(E) The harnessing of the Danhim falls for an annual production of 745,000,000 kWh will result in the general electrification of the whole of South Viet-Nam and the installation of a whole complex of chemical industries in the vicinity of the falls. Low-cost electric power will also help to create in the High Tablelands a series of secondary industries (paper-mills, rayon manufactures, canned fruit industries, pine resin production, turpentine manufacture, etc.).

III. WAYS AND MEANS

(A) A general method should be applied liable to promote factors conducive to a more balanced organization of the country's development. To this end, the country will have to mobilize to the fullest extent its financial assets and the energy of its people, and hence the necessity:

To reorganize the public services;

To train technically qualified personnel;

To have recourse to foreign technical assistance in the form of loans;

To carry out a financial reform with a view to streamlining a legislation, the complexity and ponderousness of which greatly hinder the implementation of plans and the smooth functioning of executive departments;

To find a solution for problems having a bearing either on the Plan as a whole, or on one of its component parts, such as financing, investments, private savings and credit, public loans, Trade Unions, land reform, etc.

(B) Until now, the reconstruction of urban areas was financed exclusively by national, regional or communal budgets. The expenditure incurred in building roads and laying electric cables and water mains was paid out of public funds to the greater advantage of private owners who benefited from the increased value of their land, but without any favourable effect on the working classes who went on living in their overcrowded slum lanes.

The time has now come to draw up a more efficient legislation, ensuring the carrying out of urbanization plans without vast outlays of money which cannot be afforded by municipal budgets and reducing the cost of building sites. The following measures seem to meet the present difficulties:

(1) Simplification of expropriation procedures and replacement of expropriation panels by arbitration commissions;

(2) A road through parcel plots should be considered as a private road if it is used for parcelling up purposes;

(3) Compulsory consolidation of disjointed plots prior to construction work. Review of the entire Trade Union legislation. Land policy: use of commons for public purposes against payment to municipal authorities; special tax on waste land; slums legislation.

/ (C) Local conditions

(C) Local conditions should be fully taken into account for urban layouts:

(1) Appropriate selection of building sites: aerated high ground; non-cultivated sand dunes; dry and well drained State land;

(2) Avoid construction sites in:

(a) Flooded areas under rice cultivation (expensive earthwork; loss of land under food crops);

(b) Main river beds and some river banks, where building activities might interfere with the normal course of the flow;

(c) Insulubrious areas: Strong or hot winds; mosquito invested, harmfully damp and malarial areas.

(D) In the public sector, the most practicable layout methods are a matter of co-ordination between the competent administration and government authorities.

In the private sector, enforcement and taxation can force contractors to fall in line with urbanization programmes, but the concept of public interest should be widened, so as to enable the national and local authorities to undertake expropriations followed by retrocessions to private bodies or individuals whose plans may offer a contribution to public welfare.

The creation of a National Equipment Fund would ease financing difficulties and provide municipalities and local bodies with working capital for expropriations motivated by the increased value of a site, or its non-rational utilization; it would also provide the necessary means for zone-wide expropriation and the carrying out of land tenure policies.

CONCLUSIONS

A nation-wide territorial layout policy, which deals with the human element and resettlement problems differs from a production and industrial equipment plan, the objectives of which are purely quantitative and economic. At the same time, in its pursuit of social and human betterment, an improved territorial layout plan cannot fail to contribute to the raising of the general economic level of the country.

/Within the general

Within the general reconstruction framework, urban and rural centres are all important component parts and each of them should have an individual layout and expansion blueprint.

Thus, general urbanization programmes must be planned by competent bodies with a view to including the following:

(a) Rehabilitation and reconstruction of rural areas;

The master plan and the general territorial layout plans with their common background of geographical and demographic factors, will be a synthesis of all programmes relating to the national infrastructure administrative organization, development of public services, promotion of handicraft and agriculture, credit policy and social welfare activity.

(b) Rehabilitation and reconstruction of urban areas.

Territorial layout plans will seek the rational utilization of land and will become the general framework for layout and expansion plans drawn up for cities, towns and villages; in Viet-Nam, villages are densely grouped, and in view of their political importance, they are an integral part of the country's urbanization pattern.